

#InstagramJesus

Weekly Devotional

A ministry of Chapel Hill
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WEEK 5

This daily devotional pairs with Mark 1:14-20 and the sermon preached Feb 2-3



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LifeGroup Guide

Review

How has Jesus been challenging you this week? Where have you experienced transformation?

Story

Mark 1:14-20

Head

Make a mental note of how many times this passage uses the word “immediately”. This is one of Mark’s favorite words throughout the gospel! How does the use of this word shape our understanding of this story?

What did Jesus mean when he said “the time is fulfilled”? How is this connected with the next statement “the kingdom of God is at hand”?

Our LifeGroup structure is directly shaped by Mark 1:17 “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” How does this verse help us understand how Jesus calls his disciples to make a head, heart, and hands commitment to follow him? Who is it who transforms the disciples to become fishers of men?

Heart

The disciples left behind many things to follow Jesus – careers, family expectations, possessions, home, family. What is different, changed or been “left behind” because of your commitment to follow Christ? What has been the cost to you?

Jesus directly used the practical experience of these fishermen’s every day work to give them a vision for kingdom-minded work. How is Jesus transforming and using your professional experience to give you a vision for living for him in the midst of your workplace or in another context?

Where do you see Jesus making you into a “fisher of men”?

Hands

Many of Jesus’ first disciples worked in the same location and/or were in the same family. Who can you pray for and reach out to this week who is in your workplace or family?

Where is God calling you to “repent and believe in the gospel”? Spend time reflecting about where you need to confess, change your behaviors and/or thought patterns and have faith in the good news of God’s saving power in Christ.

DAY 1 – Monday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:14-20

Ask

Make a mental note of how many times this passage uses the word “immediately”. This is one of Mark’s favorite words throughout the gospel! How does the use of this word shape our understanding of this story?

Reflect

Since moving to the Boston area, I have a whole new appreciation for the lengthy freeway on and off ramps we have here in the Pacific Northwest. In the greater Boston area, such on and off ramps don’t exist (some “on-ramps” include a stop sign followed by a 90° turn onto an active freeway lane). With the usual heavy traffic, there is never a good time to try to get on the freeway. When you see an opening, you have to go for it immediately.

Within Mark 1:14-20, our keyword “immediately” appears twice as Simon (Peter) and Andrew then James and John make an immediate decision to follow Jesus. Ponder the weightiness of this. These four men were all wondering who is this Jesus. It is possible that they knew something about him as word had spread about the ministry of John the Baptist. It is also likely that they were familiar with the Old Testament texts concerning the expected Messiah (Christ), but keep in mind they are fishermen, not religious scholars by trade. While they may have had some ideas, their questions far out-numbered their answers.

There are plenty of excuses these four men could have brought up. They could have claimed that they need to attend to their family business, or that they didn’t know enough about who he is to feel comfortable, or they could have said, “Sounds great, but this is not the right time for me.” They don’t give any of these excuses though. They are curious to find out who this Jesus really is.

Notice the way Mark records the response of the four men. Is it a verbal response or do they respond in action? As you respond to Jesus’ invitation, is there something holding you back from acting upon it?

DAY 2 – Tuesday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:14-15; Revelation 21:1-4

Ask

What did Jesus mean when he said “the time is fulfilled”? How is this connected with the next statement “the kingdom of God is at hand”?

Reflect

For the past few years on Easter Eve, I’ve attended a church in the Boston area. The lengthy service starts out in darkness for an hour with the only light coming from candles (like when we sing “Silent Night” at Chapel Hill). The candles are eventually blown out and the congregation sits in darkness and quietness. Then all the lights in the chapel come on in full brightness and all the people stand cheering and ringing bells. The darkness is gone, the light has come. It is a celebratory moment!

Revelation 21:1-4 certainly seems to have this sense of celebration with death, mourning, crying, and pain all described as being no more as God’s kingdom is fully established. Perhaps such is what the people expected when Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:14), a dramatic change. Yet, instead of everything becoming bright and clear with the coming of Jesus, darkness (death, mourning, pain, etc.) continued to exist.

Notice the first phrase in Mark 1:14. When John the Baptist was arrested then Jesus declared the kingdom of God is at hand. In his commentary on the passage, James Edwards writes, “The arrest of John and the beginning of Jesus’ ministry are intentionally correlated to show that the gospel is proclaimed and known in adversity and suffering”.¹

What is the kingdom of God? The ESV Study Bible notes that the phrase “the kingdom of God is at hand” means “that God’s rule over people’s hearts and lives is now being established.” Even when we feel like we are still surrounded by darkness, we know that we have the light of Christ and look forward to the day when it will become a blazing light for all the world to see with the second coming of Jesus Christ (Rev. 21:1-4).

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 44.

DAY 3 – Wednesday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:16-17

Ask

Our LifeGroup structure is directly shaped by Mark 1:17 “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” How does this verse help us understand how Jesus calls his disciples to make a head, heart, and hands commitment to follow him? Who is it who transforms the disciples to become fishers of men?

Reflect

One of the things I enjoy doing in my free time is jigsaw puzzles. My strategy when starting in on a puzzle is to familiarize myself with the picture on the box and see how the components fit together before focusing on the details of each piece.

There are three distinct pieces in the invitation of Jesus in Mark 1:17, yet like the pieces of a puzzle, we need to keep these pieces together to have a full picture of what it means to be a disciple. If you are in a LifeGroup, mostly likely you are already familiar with the names we use for these three main pieces: head, heart, and hands.

Head – Follow me

The first step in discipleship comes with a decision to follow Jesus. As we saw yesterday, the four fishermen Jesus initially offered the invitation to decided immediately to follow him as they were eager to know more about him. The process of learning more about who Jesus is doesn't stop with the decision to follow him. It accelerates. We are able to learn more about Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit as we walk in faith.

Heart – and I will make you become

As we learn more about Jesus in following him, we are transformed. Yet this transformation is not of our own doing. It is Jesus at work in us. This transformation is a change of heart (check out Ezekiel 36:26). One Greek Lexicon (Bible dictionary) defines this transformation as “to experience a change in nature and so indicate entry into a new condition.”²

Hands – fishers of men

This is the new condition we enter into. We are called to be a people who reach out others with the Good News. We'll talk more about what this looks like later, but for now I encourage you to begin thinking about ways in which you've noticed transformation in your life as you have followed Jesus.

² BDAG, s.v. “γίνομαι,” 198.

DAY 4 – Thursday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:17-20

Ask

The disciples left behind many things to follow Jesus – careers, family expectations, possessions, home, family. What is different, changed or been “left behind” because of your commitment to follow Christ? What has been the cost to you?

Reflect

Pop quiz: What is Newton’s third law of motion? Simply put, Newton’s third law of motion is that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. When a ball hits a wall, for example, the ball is exerting as much force on the wall as the wall is exerting back on the ball.

Why bring in a review of physics to today’s devotion? Look at the nature of the disciples’ response to Jesus’ invitation in Mark 1:17-20. A few days ago I asked you what sort of response it was, whether it was verbal or action based. In looking back at the text, we see it is action based, the disciples are getting up and following Jesus. As they move towards Jesus, they are also leaving something or someone behind.

What are you leaving behind as you seek to follow Jesus? If you became a Christian later in life, you are likely able to name several things and/or relationships that were impacted when you became a Christian. It is not just about relationships or things being left behind when we dedicate our lives to Jesus. We also have to continue to surrender that which is incompatible with following Christ. Is there something which has crept back into your life that keeps you from following Christ whole-heartedly?

Since we had a short review of science today, how about we close with a short review of grammar? An adverb modifies the main verb, but the adverb in itself is not intended to be the key idea of the sentence. The key idea is encapsulated by the main verb. In the Greek of Mark 1:18 and 20, the description of the disciples leaving something behind is an adverb. The main verb (the key idea the author wants you to focus on) is that disciples *followed* Jesus. Focus on what you are following, not on what you are leaving behind! If you have extra time when you meet with your LifeGroup, talk about how you focus on Jesus in your day-to-day or week-by-week life.

DAY 5 – Friday

Daily devotional

Read

Jeremiah 16:14-16

Ask

Jesus directly used the practical experience of these fishermen's every day work to give them a vision for kingdom-minded work. How is Jesus transforming and using your professional experience to give you a vision for living for him in the midst of your workplace or in another context?

Where do you see Jesus making you into a "fisher of men"?

Reflect

Progressive Insurance has a creative add out for television. The scene opens with the Progressive Insurance spokesperson being led through the jungle by a panicked adventurer who cannot understand the language of the tribe he just ran into. Turns out, the tribe is an old-fashioned insurance company operating in the middle of a jungle who communicate solely in insurance-related terms. The Progressive Insurance spokesperson translates for your everyday adventurer and the day is saved (if you want to see the clip, look for "Fluent in Insurance" on YouTube).

When Jesus calls the disciples in Mark 1:17, he uses language they would be familiar with based on their line of work. We see Jesus do this several times throughout the Gospel. For example, in Mark 4:26-34 Jesus describes the kingdom of God using gardening language, which would be very familiar to all in that agricultural society. We even see this in the Old Testament such as in Jeremiah 16:14-16, where fishers and hunters are described as those who will bring the people of God back to a restored Israel.

One key thing to keep in mind is that while Jesus uses the familiar language to describe the work he intends for the disciples to do, he is not expecting them to know how to do it. Remember the key phrase in Mark 1:17, "I will make you become ...". Jesus is the one who transforms their work for his kingdom.

If Jesus were walking by your place of work or the place where you spend most of your day and called out for you to follow him in the same way he did for the disciples, what phrase might he use instead of "fishers of men"? In your LifeGroups, take time to share about how you see God at work in your different lines of work.

DAY 6 – Saturday
Daily devotional

Read

Matthew 5:43-45; Ephesians 6:18

Ask

Many of Jesus' first disciples worked in the same location and/or were in the same family. Who can you pray for and reach out to this week who is in your workplace or family?

Reflect

I have the privilege of living in a dorm with about 18 other young women at seminary. Over the course of the semester, we get to know each other pretty well as we share a common space and one tiny kitchen (yes, we are all responsible for providing our own dinners). Every Sunday night, a few of us gather together to share prayer requests and pray for one another and all those in our dorm. Personally, I've found that this practice of praying for one another helps me to be more aware of and empathetic towards what they are going through. God has been transforming me through this practice of praying for them, making me a better friend and house-mate.

The Ask question today may be easy to rush through, but I want to encourage you to slow down when you discuss it with your LifeGroups. Here are some pointers and further questions to help you in your reflection:

- Take a minute to think about those who are in your workplace or those who are family members/close-friends. Pick out five people to focus on.
- Are these five people you are thinking of people whom you have prayed for before? Have you ever felt that you have grown tired of praying for them?
- For the five people, can you think of specific prayer requests for each one? How about prayers of thanks for each one? Do you feel like you can ask them, "How can I be praying for you this week?"
- How can you reach out to each of the five people this week? For those whom you haven't communicated with in a while, just the act of reaching out is significant. For those whom you are in regular contact with, how can you reach out to them in a special way (ex. sending a note instead of a regular phone call)?

DAY 7 – Sunday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:14-15

Ask

Where is God calling you to “repent and believe in the gospel”? Spend time reflecting about where you need to confess, change your behaviors and/or thought patterns and have faith in the good news of God’s saving power in Christ.

Reflect

Today’s Ask question brings us back to this week’s core text and invites us to do some self-reflection. It may be easy to rush past this question saying something like, “I’ve already done that!” But this is a question we need to keep coming back to. It’s part of the reason why Chapel Hill does a celebration of baptism on the first weekend of every year. The initial baptism is significant, but we need to continually hold that posture of repenting and believing.

What does it mean to repent and believe? Do you remember what action is used to define repentance? It is turning around. Repentance is acknowledging that we are heading in the wrong direction and turning around to head the other (the right) direction. In his commentary on what it means to repent and believe, James Edwards writes the following, “If repentance denotes that which one turns from, belief denotes that which one turns to — the gospel. Both verbs in Greek are present imperatives, that is, they enjoin living in a condition of repentance and belief as opposed to momentary acts.”³

Have you ever had the misfortune of grabbing one of those carts at the grocery store with a wheel that no longer functions properly? As a result, even if you gave the cart a push in one direction, when you let go it will drift towards the other direction. We are kind of like those carts. It is in our nature to drift away from God. We have to consciously work to keep our focus on God.

Where have you drifted away from God? This is a tough question and requires vulnerability. It is possible that not everyone in your LifeGroup is willing to share their response. That’s ok. I want to encourage you though that being vulnerable with someone or your small group can be tremendously beneficial. They can pray for you and help hold you accountable to moving in the right direction.

³ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 47.